(ii) to render advice on issues referred to it by Government on classification of goods and products alongwith the applicable tariffs on such goods and products;

(iii) to carry out technical studies on cost of production of different goods and services and their competitiveness in relation to other countries so as to generate data and parameters relevant to tariff fixation.

(iv) to undertake such other tasks as may assigned by Government from time to time; and

(v) to present an Annual Report to Government of its activities.

Changes in Small Scale and Cottage Industries sector

496. SHRI GOVINDRAM MIRI: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state the changes, if any, Government contemplate to introduce in small scale and cottage industries sectors?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI SIKANDER BAKHT): The development of Small Scale Industries Sector is a continuous process, which is ensured through various policies viz. adequate and timely credit, fiscal concession protection through reservation of items, technology up gradation and modernisation, entrepreneurship training, etc. These policies are reoriented from time to time and the changes incorporated where found feasible in order to facilitate the overall growth of this sector.

Backlog of patent cases

497. SHRI GOVINDRAO ADIK: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news report appearing in the Hindustan Times dated the 15th April, 1998 under the caption "efforts on to enhance manpower of patent offices to clear backlog";

(b) if so, the reaction of Government to the observations made therein and action taken/ proposed to be taken in the matter;

(c) the present status regarding the nature of reforms and legislation proposed to be brought about during the current year;

(d) what is the pendency position of patent received/processed/cleared and pending as on 31st April, 1998; and

(e) whether there is a proposal to shift Apex Patent Office from Calcutta to New Delhi; if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI SIKANDER BAKHT): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (e) In the absence of any significant modernisation or restructuring of the patent administration system since its establishment, over 29,000 patent applications were awiting examination as in April, 1998. This has led to delays in grant of patents. During the period 1997-98, 1844 patents were granted.

The Government has been taking steps from time to time to modernise the system including the preparation of a plan to provide reguired qualified personnel, infrastructural facilities, optimisation of available resources through reorientation of functions between offices and elimination of backlog of patent applications.

Revival of sick industrial units

498. SHRI GOVINDRAO ADIK: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether a large chunk of viable sick industries, on propoer assessment, has been restarted under Rehabilitation on Revival Programme through special assistance in various States;

(b) if so, the details of the funds provided, State-wise for sick industrial units under the scheme for revival of potentially to viable sick units during 8th Plan;

(c) the details of ambitious Programme finalised to deal with industrial sickness during 9th Plan; and

(d) whether renewal of funds have been properly utilised by the States during the last three years with State-wise, breakup and the results in terms of rehabilitation of workers achieved?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI SIKANDER BAKHT): (a) to (c) According to Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR), 2145 sick industrial companies were registered with them under the